

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Proposed Continuing Education requirements for Registered Environmental Health Specialists

### **Why should continuing education be required of Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS)?**

The Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee, California Environmental Health Association, National Environmental Health Association, California Directors of Environmental Health, California Conference of Local Health Officers, Department of Public Health (CDPH), individual REHS, and the public strongly support continuing education as a means of professional development for REHS. Currently, there are no regulatory requirements or standards for continuing education programs for REHS. However, current law, as codified in Section 106705 of the California Health and Safety Code, provides for the establishment of the requirement and standards for continuing education for REHS. Specifically, Section 106705 states “The department upon recommendation of the committee, may, by regulation, establish the requirement and standards for continuing education for registered environmental health specialists. The standards shall be established in a manner to assure that a variety of forms of continuing education are available to registered environmental health specialists.”

REHS are employed by private industry, universities, federal, state and local governments. Many of these registrants are on the front of line public health protection. The California Legislature and CDPH have recognized that “environmental health is a dynamic field that is continually evolving into new and complex areas of concern”. Continuing education will provide opportunities for REHS to maintain scientific and technological skills needed for today’s ever changing challenges in environmental health.

The Department has developed a regulation package that establishes standards for continuing education for REHS. These proposed regulations are currently in the rulemaking process.

### **How many continuing education hours will be required?**

The continuing education required for renewal of the applicant’s registration will be a minimum of 24 contact hours. A contact hour is equivalent to 50-60 minutes of participation in an organized learning experience. The 24 contact hours of continuing education should be successfully completed during the two years preceding the application for renewal.

Some courses are not presented in “contact hours” but in college units or Continuing Education Units (CEUs). The number of contact hours per unit can vary among colleges and training providers but generally the following conversions will apply:

50-60 minutes	= 1 contact hour
0.1 continuing education unit (CEU)	= 1 contact hour
1 quarter unit	= 10 contact hours
1 semester unit	= 15 contact hours

### **What is the status of the proposed continuing education requirements for REHS?**

The regulations that will require continuing education for REHS in California are currently in the rulemaking process. It is anticipated that the continuing education regulations will be adopted in 2009.

**Who will approve the continuing education courses?**

CDPH will approve Accreditation Agencies (AA) who are responsible for approving and monitoring course providers. AAs will accredit and approve course providers of continuing education for the REHS. Once course providers are accredited they are Recognized Providers (RPs). RPs will provide approved training for the REHS. There are several organizations who have expressed interest in becoming an AA that include the California Environmental Health Association, National Environmental Health Association, Environmental Health Institute, California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health and California State University.

**What is a Recognized Provider and Accreditation Agency?**

Each Recognized Provider of continuing education courses must be evaluated and approved by an Accreditation Agency (AA). The AA is authorized through the CDPH-REHS program. AAs are required to meet established criteria for identifying course providers that are competent, relevant and accountable.

**How can I become a continuing education Recognized Provider?**

First, you will need to apply for approval by an Accreditation Agency. A List of Accreditation Agencies will be posted on the REHS website. Each approved course you teach counts towards your contact hours the first time it is presented.

**What subjects may be approved for continuing education?**

Food protection, solid waste management, liquid waste management, medical waste management, water supply, housing and institutions, bathing places, vector control, hazardous materials management, underground tanks, air sanitation, safety and accident prevention, land development and use, disaster sanitation, electromagnetic radiation, milk and dairy products, noise control, occupational health, rabies and animal disease control, recreational health, bioterrorism, emergency preparedness, lead poisoning, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, epidemiology and communicable diseases, public health, environmental health administration and management.

**Where can I take courses?**

It is anticipated that local colleges, university, state funded training, county-based training, professional organization and online courses will be approved through the Accreditation Agencies.

**Who is responsible for paying the registration fees for continuing education coursework, me or my employer?**

The employer may choose to pay registration fees based on a bargaining unit agreement with an employee union. However, there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an employer to pay for registration fees for continuing education.

**Does my employer have to give me release time to attend classes?**

There is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an employer to grant release time to attend classes.

**Can I get credit for continuing education courses that are pre-existing?**

Only continuing education courses that are presented by a Recognized Provider and reviewed and accredited by the Accreditation Agency will be counted toward your continuing education requirement.

**Are existing continuing education courses required to be reviewed and approved?**

Yes, all continuing education courses are required to be accredited through an Accreditation Agency for credit toward California registration requirements.

**How do I verify course completion?**

At the time of your biennial renewal, you will be required to submit a form listing all of your completed courses. You must keep copies of certificates and documentation of completed courses for five (5) years as random audits will be conducted after each biennial renewal cycle.

**How do I notify CDPH of course completion?**

You will indicate completion of continuing education contact hours on your biennial REHS renewal form. Knowingly making a false statement on an application for renewal is grounds for revocation of registration (CHSC section 106715). Random audits will be used to determine compliance.

**Do existing continuing education presenters have to be approved as Recognized Providers?**

Yes, existing continuing education presenters need to apply with an Accreditation Agency and become a Recognized Provider before their coursework will be accepted as meeting the registration requirements for continuing education.

**Can I complain about a course Recognized Provider?**

Yes, you can file a complaint by completing the REHS program's complaint form with a description of your concerns.

**Are retired REHS required to meet the continuing education requirements?**

No. If a retired REHS returns to active status they must meet the continuing education requirements.